

Ellen,

Looking at the photo of the octagon building in Kearney that is posted on Robert Kline's website brought back such memories! When my husband and I first moved here to Kearney in the summer of 1972 we stayed in a room on the ground floor of that building for about a month until we could move into the house we were purchasing. It was in pretty bad condition by then, run down and termite riddled. It was torn down a couple of years later.

Here is a little history of the building and its surroundings. Back in the 1920's as more people began driving cars and traveling during the summer, there was a growing demand for camping spots, especially in towns along major highways. Since the Lincoln Highway, first transcontinental highway, now Highway 30, goes through the heart of Kearney, that was especially true here.

On March 30, 1927 plans were announced in the *Kearney Daily Hub* newspaper for the Midway City Tourist Park which would be located one mile east of the Midway Hotel. That was the east edge of the city. It was to be situated on 4 acres of land and would include a pavilion in the center. This building, with a fireplace, would be a place to gather, eat meals, and provide shelter during storms. Radiating out from the pavilion would be four groups of cabins, five in each group. With a description like that it had to be octagon in shape.

By July 9, according to the *Hub*, the Midway City Tourist Park had been in use for two weeks although not yet complete. Fourteen cabins were done with garages between. This center pavilion had to be completed also because the news account, in describing what was done listed the "kitchen with 8 electric stoves and adjoining community room where people can eat..."

The facility continued operation as the Midway Tourist Park through the 1930's. In 1940 the Kearney City Directory lists that address as the Shambaugh Motor Lodge. In 1947 it went back to being called the Midway but now it was an Auto Court. In 1955 it became the Midway Siesta Motel. The Midway part of the name was soon dropped and for the next 15 years it was the Siesta Motel until it was leveled.

When we stayed there the former pavilion had been divided into motel rooms. Not knowing its history then I did not look closely at the building, not even to note its size. Now I wish I had, but I did not know then how involved I would become in learning about the history of this area.

Mardi Anderson
Buffalo County Historical Society Archives